

**THE SOFIA UNIVERSITY CULTURAL CENTRE ANNOUNCES A  
CALL FOR PAPERS**

For the fourth in a series of international interdisciplinary conferences on the cultural history of modernity. The subject of the conference is:

**ARTS AND MEMORY (20TH – 21ST CENTURY)**

This international conference will be held at the Centre Hotel in the Apriltsi resort (near the town of Troyan), on 7, 8 and 9 December 2014.\* The official languages of the conference will be Bulgarian and English. Application deadline: **15 October 2014**.

Applications (accompanied by a topic within the thematic area of the conference, a 300-word abstract, and a short bibliography) should be submitted electronically to the following address: [conference.cultcentersu@gmail.com](mailto:conference.cultcentersu@gmail.com).

**Thematic Area of the Conference**

What is the relationship between the arts and memory today? This question is worth asking, regardless of –or precisely because of – the situation we are in at present: a situation of a frozen and omnipresent “now”, of compression of time down to the present point, and of rejection of continuity in favour of the moment.

It is precisely in the mode of presentism – a central theme and a guiding thread of the annual conferences in Apriltsi – that the problem of memory, paradoxically, stops appearing to be untimely and is revealed in all its poignancy. For memory is less a turn to the past than an effect of the present and a technique for the future. Being a basic condition for retaining semantic integrity, but also a potential path to the disintegration of culturally stereotyped meanings, our ability to remember is an ability to construct, while the borderline between it and the playful, experimenting imagination is very thin. And just as the domain of the aesthetic, where one works and experiments with new forms and new techniques, where opportunities are sought and opened up, memory also contains a powerful creative potential for change and incessant renewal. Hence, by constantly renegotiating meaning, both art and memory reject every final meaning and every frozen form, every monumentalization of the past or every fetishization of utopian projects.

Being so valuable to modernity, it may be precisely this openness of meanings that imparted a privileged status to memory in the past century. Necessity, but also the burden of remembering; the dynamic connection with oblivion; the complex relationships with history and historiography; the anomalies, deviations and endless ramifications of the gardens of individual and collective memory; the associative games and the tendency

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\* The first part of the conference may start in Sofia; this will be specified later, depending on the conference program.

towards constant inclusion and exclusion attitudes; the borders between the experienced and the imagined – these topics have become signs, essential features of modern thinking. They underlie that changed consciousness of time, which, as already Baudelaire indicated, is a distinctive feature of aesthetic modernity. And this modernity – along with the sense of time acceleration, of a feverish drive forward, dynamism, movement and speed, or, in other words, everything that the avant-gardes of the early twentieth century would bring to the forefront of art – ultimately gave rise to a peculiar view of the world that denies continuity and rips apart the structuredness of history, thus favouring anachronisms, multiplicity, interlinkage of essentially different spaces and times.

The same transformation is to be discerned in the random collage techniques and the carefully contrived montage techniques; in the multi-facetedness of the gaze; in the deconstruction and fragmentation of the object; in the quotationism and accelerated “antiquization”. It is also to be discerned in the high Literary Modernism techniques, in the free associative stream of thought, in the unleashing of an “involuntary memory” and in the “unlocking” of an unconscious which, according to some, is the site of memory (*lieu de mémoire*). Last but not least, it is to be discerned in the constantly discussed problem of technology and mechanical reproduction, and, more generally, the problem of modern cultural forms which have transformed the very conditions of memory production. Would it be an innocent joke if we were to point out that “the end of art history” came in the very decade in which Frances Yates reminded us of the ancient “art of memory”, examining the problem of mnemonic techniques in a new light? Could it be that the series of post-histories, proliferating throughout the twentieth century, has converted memory into its own most important technique: the technique of re-thinking?

Within this interdisciplinary area, we will examine the following issues and thematic lines:

- The study of memory situated at the intersection of ethics and aesthetics, sociology, psychology and psychoanalysis. The role of the arts in comprehending memory. What are the different things that the arts can tell us about memory?
- The arts in the twentieth and twenty-first century and the memory of their own history: critical readings and debates; trends, movements, case studies. Art as a “*lieu de mémoire*”.
- Thematization and conceptualization of memory in various arts. Specific characteristics of the form, of the mediator, of the genre, etc. Performative and/or representative potential of various arts in the presentation of memory.
- The arts and the contemporary politics of memory: personal and collective, cultural and transcultural memory. Politics of representation; competing and confrontational forms of memory; the arts as a battlefield for memory.
- Fiction, construction, fantasy and memory, provocations and falsifications: artistic uses and abuses of memory; ethos and poiesis of remembering.
- The arts and utopias of memory. Forms of the utopia of absolute memory in various arts. Anachronisms, atlases, temporal and spatial shifts.

- Structuring and expositions of memory in various arts. Mnemonic techniques; archival links; museum presentation. Memory and indexicality; memory and symbolic forms.
- The role of memory in the perception of art. The problem about audiences, their memory, and the problem of interpretation. The work of art as an actualization of memory. Traces and traces of traces.
- Arts, culture of memory, and culture of trauma. Critical theories and aesthetic categories of expression/non-expression of trauma. The stance of the viewer: secondary traumatization versus critique of identification.
- Arts and extreme events of modernity: crimes against humanity, genocide, nuclear threat, environmental disasters. The problem of “the limits of representation” and the shifting of those limits in various arts, media, and genres.
- Forgetting and memory; necessity and/or amnesia. Is the art of forgetting possible; do “lethatechniques” exist? Crises of memory, hypermemory, excess of memory.

The conference has an organizing committee made up of eminent Bulgarian scholars. Part of them will present their papers at the conference. Those invited are:

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| Antoaneta Koleva | Deyan Deyanov      | Petya Kabakchieva |
| Boyko Penchev    | Dimitar Vatsov     | Pepka Boyadjieva  |
| Boyan Znepolski  | Ivan Krastev       | Raycho Pozharliev |
| Boyan Manchev    | Kolyo Koev         | Ruzha Smilova     |
| Daniela Koleva   | Liliana Ivanova    | Stefan Popov      |
| Daniel Smilov    | Maya Grekova       | Stilian Yotov     |
| Darin Tenev      | Miglena Nikolchina | Todor Hristov     |
|                  | Milena Iakimova    | Vassil Vidinsky   |
|                  | Nelly Ognyanova    |                   |

The other participants should apply for a paper or a presentation within the thematic areas of the conference, which is open to young scholars and people working in the sphere of the humanities, social sciences, and the arts (assistant professors, doctoral students, young artists up to 35 years of age) from Sofia University and elsewhere. Applications should include the title/topic of the paper/presentation, a 300-word abstract, and a short bibliography. General topics addressing the above-mentioned issues are also welcome, but the committee will particularly encourage analyses and presentations of specific case studies, specific research hypotheses, political programs, artistic projects and works, processes in philosophy, science, and the arts.

The conference will be accompanied by a

## **DOCTORAL STUDENT SEMINAR**

run by the members of the organizing committee. Applicants for the seminar (doctoral students in their second or third year) are invited to present a topic or problem related to their dissertation (the topic needs not fall within the thematic areas of the conference, but such proposals will be given priority). The seminar will provide a forum where the particular topics and problems of the doctoral theses will be discussed by experts and peers in a broad interdisciplinary context. Participants in the seminar will also have the opportunity to attend and take part in the discussions during the sessions and the round tables at the conference.

**A limited number of participants will be admitted to the doctoral seminar, and it is available only to doctoral students at Sofia University. In their proposals, applicants must clearly indicate that they are applying for the doctoral seminar.**

**Application deadline for the doctoral seminar: 15 October 2014**

Applications – which must include a topic from the dissertation, a 300-word abstract, and a letter of reference from the supervisor declaring that the student will be given credits for participating in the seminar – should be sent electronically to [conference.cultcentersu@gmail.com](mailto:conference.cultcentersu@gmail.com).

**Expenses of participants from Sofia University (for travel, meals and accommodation) will be covered by the organizers. External participants are expected to cover their own expenses.**